



News Release

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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First Ever Post Season Aquifer Recharge Set To Begin Tomorrow In Magic Valley

The North Side Canal Company is providing use of its canal system, manpower, and equipment for the first ever post-irrigation season recharge of the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer starting Saturday and continuing until late November.

The goal is to direct the greatest amount of water from the canal through the aquifer toward the Thousand Springs reach of the Snake River.

The water used to recharge the aquifer is being purchased by the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators and the Idaho Dairymen's Association. The recharge is part of mitigation agreements submitted to the Idaho Department of Water Resources on June 29 in order to avoid water curtailment that was set to take effect July 6.

The curtailment orders were issued as part of a continuing response to water delivery calls made in 2005 by senior water right holders Blue Lakes Trout Farm and Clear Springs Foods' Snake River Farm.

The post-irrigation season recharge will add water to the aquifer and provide mitigation for the water diversions of the junior ground water users to compensate the spring users for their 2007 water shortage.

"This post season aquifer recharge project couldn't have been performed without the cooperation of the North Side Canal Company. Its network of canals is uniquely situated for delivery of water to the aquifer at locations that will benefit the springs' water users," says Sean Vincent, IDWR Hydrology Section Manager. "Normally North Side Canal Company performs maintenance this time of the year, so they had to make some sacrifices to make sure aquifer recharge would take place," he added.

The post-season aquifer recharge is unique because most often the canals are used to deliver water from the Snake River to another location, such as a farm, with as little water loss as possible.

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In this instance the canals are being used to deliver water to specific locations in the North Side canal system as identified using the state's computer model of the Eastern Snake Plain aquifer. Water that leaks out of the canal system into the ground is projected by the computer model to provide maximum benefit to the springs.

IDWR hydrologists will monitor the recharge effort and use various flow measuring devices, including acoustic Doppler, to determine where the water enters the aquifer. The computer model will again be used to assess the effects of the recharge on spring flows.

This project will also help IDWR hydrologists understand the interaction between the network of canals and the water contribution to the aquifer, and provide useful information for future aquifer recharge projects.

Earlier this week North Side Canal Company ended its irrigation operations for the year. The company then drained and prepared the canal system for the recharge project, which will commence tomorrow morning and will last for approximately six weeks. The aquifer recharge will take place in a limited window between the end of the irrigation season and the onset of ice buildup in the canal system.

The aquifer recharge project required considerable collaboration between the North Side Canal Company, the Idaho Department of Water Resources, the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators, and the Idaho Dairymen's Association.

"It's gratifying to see these entities working together to improve the aquifer and the flows from the springs," says IDWR Director David Tuthill. "This is the kind of cooperation that we'll need more of in the future to make it through dry water years. This kind of effort really addresses the problem and provides solutions instead of other options like curtailment."

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